



Painting of handcart company by W. H. Jackson
Photo — courtesy Utah Historical Society

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were not able to replenish their food supplies at Fort Laramie as they had planned to do.

"Part of the handcarts had become useless and were left by the wayside. The rest of the carts were so heavily loaded that, while crossing the steep slopes west of Fort Laramie, the emigrants were forced to throw away much badly needed bedding and clothing."

Mr. Madsen continued, "But the biggest factor which brought about tragedy was the fact that heavy snows and very cold weather set in much earlier than had been the case for many years during the past. By the middle of September, heavy frosts made the nights uncomfortable. The members of the Willie and Martin companies could not keep warm with their limited supply of clothing. Snowstorms came every few days. Fierce winds piled the snow a foot and a half deep on the level.

"Scantily clothed and weakened by

that!" His heart sank within him, and he burst into tears.

"But his heroic wife came to his aid, and in a sympathetic tone said: "Don't cry, Jimmie. I'll pull the handcart for you."

"In crossing the river the shins and limbs of the waders came in contact with sharp cakes of ice, which inflicted wounds on them which did not heal until long after the sufferers had reached the valley."

Mr. Madsen went on, "Dan W. Jones also reported the condition of the handcart company. Stephen, will you read his report?"

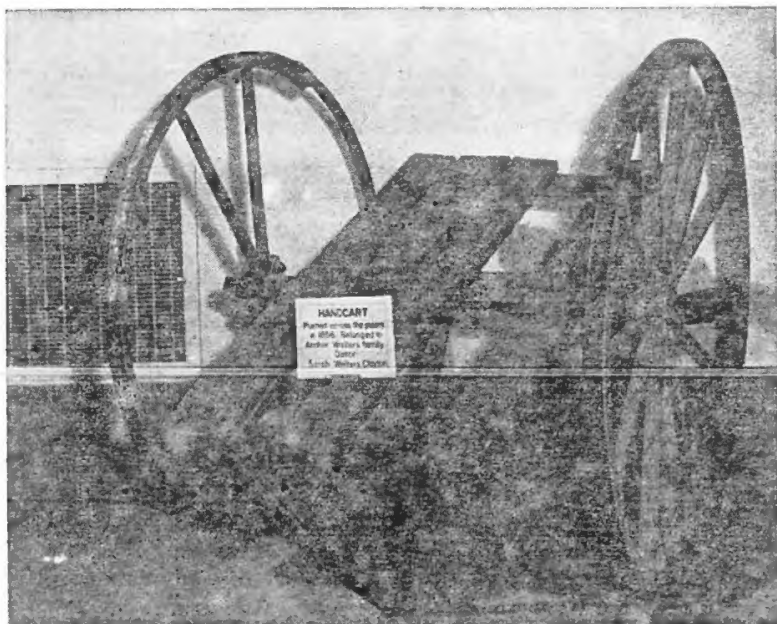
"Yes, sir," Stephen replied; and then he read:

"The train was strung out for three or four miles. There were old men pulling and tugging at their carts, many of which were loaded with sick wives and children. We saw little children, six and eight years of age, struggling through the snow and mud. As night came on the mud and snow froze to their clothing."

"Food supplies rapidly vanished and there was no chance to get more," the instructor went on with the story. "The destitute sufferers, unable to continue

The party returned to Iowa and Lige came to Utah in 1847. Arthur D. Buckingham later willed the saddle to the Daughters of Utah Pioneers.

The lower floor gives silent but powerful testimony that the Utah pioneers were a vigorous and independent people who, knowing the rigorous life to which they would be subjected, accepted it with strength and valor of spirit. They did not fear the great west, for they knew and believed in the dignity and power of hard work.



Walters Handcart — Lower Floor.

Handcart. Archer Walters, with his wife, Harriet, and five children, left England in March, 1856, and crossed the plains with the Ellsworth Company, the first handcart company to make the journey. He had learned the joiner or carpenter trade, also the profession of undertaker. He helped to build many of the handcarts which made the long, arduous trip.

The little carts were loaded with all the earthly possessions of these people, sometimes many had to share one cart, being allowed only forty pounds per person. They averaged twelve or fourteen miles each day, some days going as many as twenty miles, and others but three or four. Mr. Walters also made some coffins for those who died and were buried along the trail. Although he himself passed away two weeks after his arrival in Salt Lake, he had helped to "build up the Lord's Kingdom in the Valley" by bringing his own family and by helping others to arrive safely.